

Dear Mutter,

I just arrived in Chicago, Illinois, and the date today is September 7, 1880. They say I’m in the Midwestern part of the country, but all I know is that it was a long train ride from Manhattan. I left the Rhineland to find a job as a brewer so I can send money back to our family, but I had no luck in New York. I came to Chicago in hopes of better luck, for I heard there are many successful German breweries around here.

I’ve only been here for a couple of days and it is a very friendly place. I was met at the train depot by the local German Society members--who I guess help men like me—and they proceeded to take me to a boarding house where I was given cheap meals and shelter for free! Above is a picture of all of us in front of the boarding house. Don’t get me wrong, I miss you all very much, but they have lots of things to remind me of home such as: German singing groups, German churches, German schools, German athletic events, and lots of German beer while I work at the bicycle factory. Yes, a factory. I haven’t found a job as a brewer yet, but as of right now I don’t have any money and I need an income. The work is strenuous and the hours are long, and I’m assembling bicycles for at least 13 hours a day; however, I’ve heard from many local Germans that there is such a group that is demanding fewer hours and more pay! Hopefully, that will happen soon.

Chicago is a huge city, and I must be honest, I am not used to this life as an urban dweller. I am disappointed. Life here isn’t as easy as some of our neighbors and the brochures made it sound. Many people are flocking from city to city in hopes of a job. People who came here for land, can no longer afford it, and people who came here as skilled workers, can no longer find a job. We all are settling for dangerous jobs at mills and factories, for we have no other options, and many of my local friends have hurt themselves doing such work.

I’ve applied to the local German society for aid. They help men like me find jobs and travel to other cities in hopes of a better life. I want to go to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I heard it’s a lot like Chicago, and the brewing business is huge. Supposedly they have a brewery called Pabst which has employed many Germans and is from German roots. I’ve heard stories of the tightly connected German societies which play cards and go to plays together. Certainly, that will make it easier to live without you and the rest of the family. I will make sure to write to you all once I have found another job and am settled in in Milwaukee. Stay safe!

Love,

Heinrich

Works Cited Page:

Picture: <http://wkcurrent.com/clients/wkcurrent/4-4-2007-5-23-52-PM-7429864.bw.jpg>

First Hand Account (Can be quoted in another source): Hoobler, Dorothy, and Thomas Hoobler. *The German American Family Album.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

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